

I have personally witnessed the detrimental effects of media consolidation in Los Angeles where Viacom has merged two local television stations (KCBS-TV and KCAL-TV).

Where different station reporters once covered the same story and brought different aspects and details of the story to light, now one reporter covers the story for both stations. Unable to spend any significant time investigating the story to unearth new facts because the story has to be “turned around” for both stations in a matter of minutes, viewers of both stations receive a poor rehash of the same “facts” and the same sound bites. What suffers is a percolation of the truth as seen through many eyes and told through many words. News stories become mass-produced chunks of pre-formatted sameness pushed out through the same hole for public consumption.

Let us remember the prophetic words of character Howard Beale in Paddy Chayefsky’s memorable script for the film “Network:”

“We are no longer an industrialized society; we aren’t even a post-industrial or technological society. We are now a corporate society, a corporate world, a corporate universe. This world is a vast cosmology of small corporations orbiting around larger corporations who, in turn, revolve around giant corporations, and this whole endless, eternal, ultimate cosmology is expressly designed for the production and consumption of useless things...”

While the news “widgets” of corporate duopolies aren’t necessarily useless, they are marked by their cost-effective sameness. Information suffers. Knowledge suffers. The public suffers most of all.

Please extend the public comment period beyond June 2. Please vote to further limit media consolidation.

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